

Hunting, Angling and Outdoor Recreation Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Plan



Message from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius

First, I'd like to thank our Service teams who stepped up to create the Midwest Hunting, Angling and Outdoor Recreation Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Plan. It began as two distinct efforts to address recent Department of Interior Secretarial Orders 3356, 3365, 3366; and increase support and engagement in ongoing state and tribal led Recruit, Retain and Reactivate (R3) activities.

There is overlap between these efforts and a great opportunity for collaboration. With that in mind, our region has created a single plan to develop, implement and evaluate our work to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters and anglers. This draft plan represents our first attempt. We are now seeking input from states, tribes, appropriate nongovernmental entities and our own employees to help refine and improve the plan.

To states and tribes, I want to emphasize that we understand and respect your expertise and authority. The plan is meant to support and enhance your hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation efforts as appropriate. That is why your review and comments on this draft plan are so critical.

There are many internal agency actions outlined in this plan that support the Department of Interior Secretarial Orders and provide ways for agency employees to become more engaged in expanding hunting, angling and outdoor recreational opportunities on public lands. That is why we are also seeking employee feedback to improve the draft plan.

Lastly, nongovernmental organizations, ranging from traditional conservation groups, to outdoor retailers and manufacturers, have a role in making outdoor recreation more accessible and enjoyable for all Americans. We want to hear from these groups as well.

Thank you for taking the time to review this draft plan and provide us with any comments, thoughts or ideas you may have. To share your thoughts with us, please feel free to contact any U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service team member listed on page 6 of this draft plan.

Sincerely,

Tom Melius

June 22, 2018

Hunting, Angling and Outdoor Recreation Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Plan

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Midwest Region

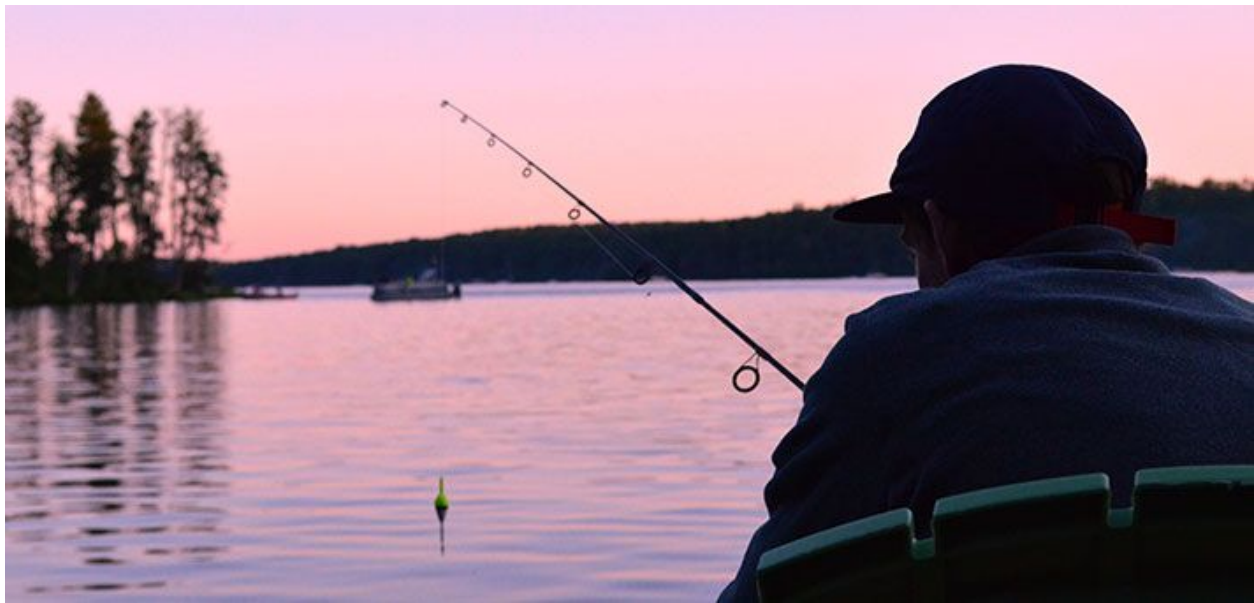
Today, more than 40 percent of Americans participate in outdoor recreation and approximately 150 million acres of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lands are open to hunting, fishing or other recreational pursuits across the country. Here in the midwest, national wildlife refuges, waterfowl production areas and other protected areas are a huge part of these traditions, yet hunting and fishing are either in decline or flat lining. We welcome sportsmen and women of all backgrounds and abilities to experience challenging hunting, fishing and other kinds of recreation in amazing places, we can be more effective when we collaborate with our partners.



A hunter takes aim at a deer from a blind. Photo by Tina Shaw/USFWS.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to identify, coordinate and align Midwest Region resources to aid in existing hunter, angler and outdoor recreation recruitment, retention and reactivation efforts with those of our partners throughout all levels of our agency. Implementing the plan's recommendations will ensure that we are supporting state, tribal and nongovernmental organization partners in their ongoing efforts. Collaborating on this shared mission will help support outdoor recreation across the region and sustain wildlife and fisheries conservation into the future. This plan will guide our progress, and help to evaluate our success from a cross programmatic, "one Service" perspective that melds all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs from our region.



Fishing in northern Wisconsin for walleye. Photo by Joanna Gilkeson/USFWS.

INTRODUCTION

At the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we play a fundamental role in providing Americans quality opportunities for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation. We do this in a variety of ways. Our biologists manage healthy habitats to support native fish and wildlife. Our land managers, law enforcement professionals and maintenance crews support safe access to publicly owned lands and waters, providing millions of acres for outdoor recreation. Our grants specialists provide more than a billion dollars annually to state and tribal partners to bolster hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities through land acquisition and wildlife and fisheries management. Our fisheries biologists stock hundreds of millions of fish each year to increase fishing opportunities. Additionally, we oversee hunting regulations and help guide bird conservation actions that ensure the long term viability of bird populations across North America. Across our agency, we support the interests of hunters and anglers and provide many other wildlife-dependent outdoor recreation activities like birding, wildlife photography, hiking, boating and opportunities to learn about these special places.

Participating in outdoor recreation has multiple benefits – it contributes to the economy, to human health and to the management of wildlife populations and their habitats. In 2016, more than 100 million Americans, roughly 40 percent of the population, participated in hunting, fishing and/or another outdoor-oriented recreation. Outdoor enthusiasts spent more than \$156 billion on travel, equipment and hunting and fishing licenses in 2016. Additionally, excise taxes paid on hunting and fishing equipment contributed approximately \$1.2 billion in direct support of fish and wildlife conservation and access to participation in every state and U.S. territory. Furthermore, a growing

body of scientific research suggests that people are healthier and happier when they spend time in nature.

Early in the 20th century, sportsmen and women recognized the critical need for a significant and sustainable source of funding for wildlife management. The revenue generated through the sale of state hunting licenses, as well as hunting and shooting equipment, has provided the foundation for the most successful model of wildlife conservation in the world. A similar movement followed in the mid-20th century to provide a sustainable funding source for fisheries conservation and management. Despite the multitude of opportunities and efforts across public agencies, the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation continues to find that participation in hunting and angling has steadily declined in the U.S. since the 1980s. In 2016, state hunting and fishing license data showed that 11.5 million, or about five percent of Americans, participated in hunting. Roughly 35.8 million Americans, which translates to 14 percent of U.S. citizens, fish. In the short-term, hunters have declined from 13 million in 2001, whereas angler number are more stable. The decline in these activities, which sustains a multibillion-dollar industry and provides the primary financial support for state-level wildlife and fisheries conservation in the U.S., poses an increasing threat to the major funding mechanism of wildlife conservation.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region – comprised of eight states and 36 federally recognized tribal governments – has a strong history of hunting and fishing participation. The longstanding outdoor traditions of Midwesterners have paved the way for wildlife, fisheries and ecosystem conservation. In parallel with national trends, the Midwest Region has seen a shift from traditional outdoor uses (e.g., hunting and fishing) to other outdoor recreation activities. Diversifying outdoor recreational uses creates pressures for generating revenue to support these alternatives on federal, state, tribal and other public lands.



Ring-necked pheasant. Photo by Karie Reishus/USFWS.

Hunting participant demographics have stagnated and continued to be dominated by white males in the Baby Boomer Generation. Other outdoor recreation activities, like fishing, have seen recent increases in participation among multiple demographics. Nonetheless, national, state and local efforts have done little to recruit new participants from diversified demographics. As a result, these efforts have struggled to keep up with the changing demographics of America or to provide potential sportsmen and women with the various learning opportunities they need to develop from an interested observer to an active participant. In recognition of this, state fish and wildlife agencies, tribes, nongovernmental organizations and the outdoor industry have invested heavily in various Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Initiatives, known as “R3.” Unfortunately, the results of those efforts over the last few decades have met with limited success. The general consensus among stakeholders for sustaining the population of hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists is to adopt a more strategic and innovative approach. Partnerships within the stakeholder community, in conjunction with an integrated framework to identify needed strategies and effectiveness measures, are important to stabilize and increase the number of hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationalists.



Kayaking at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by USFWS.

Coordination of local, regional and national efforts are led by the [Council for the Advancement of Hunting and Shooting Sports](#) and the [Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation](#). Both organizations are directed by members from the [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#), industry representatives and nongovernmental organizations. States are continuing to create step-down R3 plans under the guidance of Council for the Advancement of Hunting and Shooting Sport and Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. These plans provide clarity regarding where R3 initiatives are needed and identify the resources required to support those efforts.

We are poised to be a strategic player nationally, regionally and locally by partnering with states, tribes and nongovernmental organizations in these efforts. This document sets a direction for our region to support this collective group of partners, as well as perform internal actions to increase the knowledge and awareness of hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation among Service employees.

Recognizing the importance of hunting, fishing and wildlife-dependent recreation, and in response to Secretarial Order 3356, the Midwest Region launched the Midwest Region Outdoor Access Initiative in December 2017.

Three teams make up the initiative:

Advisory Team:

The advisory team is comprised of regional leadership who ensure national effort integration, set priorities, secure resources, eliminate barriers and are accountable for deliverables.

Charlie Blair (Co-chair), National Wildlife Refuge System

Jim Hodgson (Co-chair), Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
Craig Czarnecki, Science Applications
Tom Cooper, Migratory Birds
Chuck Traxler, External Affairs

Hunt, Fish and Outdoor Recreation Team:

The hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation team is charged with review of regional and station-level policies that unnecessarily complicate or impede public access, or do not support R3 efforts.

Charlie Blair (Team Sponsor), National Wildlife Refuge System
Deb Beck (Team Lead), National Wildlife Refuge System
AnnMarie Krmpotich, Science Applications
Tina Shaw, External Affairs
Maggie O'Connell, National Wildlife Refuge System
Rob McGinn, Budget and Administration

Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation "R3" Team:

The R3 Team will develop and implement plans to support state R3 plans and other partner outdoor recreation plans.

Jim Hodgson (Team sponsor), Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
Kyle Daly (Team Lead), Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
Melissa Clark, External Affairs
AnnMarie Krmpotich, Science Applications
Cathy Nigg, National Wildlife Refuge System
Dan Lovdahl, Budget and Administration
Anna Sidie-Slettedahl, Migratory Birds
Tim Smigielski, Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation

This plan guides implementation of the priorities of the Midwest Outdoor Access Initiative. The Outdoor Access Initiative Teams are charged with completing and implementing this plan across the region, therefore increasing public access to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lands, solidifying state, tribal and nongovernmental organization partnerships and increasing capacity of the Midwest Region to engage in R3 activities.



A white-tailed deer taken during a non-ambulatory hunt. Photo by Tina Shaw/USFWS.

GOALS

1. Increase public participation in hunting, angling and outdoor recreation in the Midwest Region in coordination with state, tribal, nongovernmental organizations and industry partners.
2. Increase public support of hunting, angling and outdoor recreation in the Midwest Region in coordination with state, tribal, nongovernmental organizations and industry partners.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

(* indicate actions that will be partially or fully implemented at field stations)

Objective 1

Increase the capacity of the Service's Midwest Region to plan and implement R3 efforts.

Priority Actions:

1. Identify a Midwest Region R3 Coordinator position that serves as the region's point of contact for R3 efforts.
 - a. By July 1, 2018 identify a Midwest Region R3 Coordinator.
2. Identify key stakeholders among agency R3 efforts. This should include Service cross-programmatic contacts, state R3 coordinators, nongovernmental

organization R3 contacts, tribal contacts, tribal treaty hunting organizations and outdoor industry partner contacts.

- a. By July 1, 2018 compile a list of R3 stakeholders.
3. Invite representatives from Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), the Council for the Advancement of Hunting and Shooting Sports (CAHSS), the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and state and tribal R3 Coordinators to provide information and training on the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model (ORAM) and national R3 efforts to regional leadership.
 - a. Contact WMI, CAHSS, RBFF, tribal and state R3 coordinators by August 1, 2018 with invitation to Midwest Regional Office.
 - b. Coordinate with Regional Directorate Team members throughout September 2018 for their involvement in a meeting with invited representatives and R3 team.
4. Create a Midwest Region cross-programmatic R3 Team.
 - a. Form R3 team by January 1, 2018.
 - b. Complete R3 Team Charter by February 1, 2018.
 - c. Hold monthly R3 Team meetings starting January, 2018.
5. *Inventory current Service R3 programs/efforts, R3 Team assists in evaluation of these programs and provide advice to practitioners.
 - a. Complete inventory of hunting, fishing, documented tribal activities and outdoor recreation programs occurring on Service lands that could be considered to be R3 activities by August 1, 2018.
 - b. Provide an ongoing tally of R3 events sponsored by the Service (e.g., held on Service lands, hosted and Service facilities) for reporting purposes.
6. *Support partner R3 programs by providing access (e.g., land and facility) resources for R3 programs.
 - a. Coordinate with Midwest Outdoor Access Initiative Teams to initiate discussions of R3 programs prior to August 1, 2018.
 - b. Coordinate with Midwest Region Hunt and Fish Chief throughout 2018 to assist with increasing access to Service lands.
 - c. By August 1, 2018, connect Service managers with state, tribal and nongovernmental organization R3 coordinators by providing contact lists to Service staff and stakeholders.

7. Coordinate with state, tribal and nongovernmental organization partners to implement strategies contained within the Midwest Region R3 Plan.
 - a. Implement regular communication and coordination with State R3 Coordinators, tribal contacts, CAHSS, RBFF and other relevant parties with quarterly calls.
 - b. Coordinate with Midwest Outdoor Access Initiative Teams, Regional Directorate Team members, WMI, RBFF, CAHSS states, tribes and nongovernmental organizations to assist in planning a Midwest R3 summit by spring 2019.
8. Coordinate with state and industry partners to develop a “Partner with the Excise Tax Payer” Program.
 - a. Implement regular communication with Midwest Region industries that pay into Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act.
9. Identify funding sources and in-kind contributions to provide partners with resources to implement R3 programs.
10. *Identify R3 training needs for Service employees. Ensure project leaders, visitor services staff and anyone engaged with public outreach in the Midwest Region understand the ORAM model, tribal trust responsibility and R3 objectives.



Young children choose their bows for an archery lessons. Photo by USFWS.

Objective 2

Improve external partnerships and coordination among the Service, state agencies, tribal governments, and nongovernmental organizations to identify what gaps the Service can fill in the Outdoor Recreation and Adoption Model (ORAM).

Priority Actions:

1. *Service employees participate in state, tribal, regional and national R3 summits and workshops.
 - a. At least one Midwest region Service representative will attend each state, tribal, regional, and national R3 summits and workshops.
2. Connect State, tribal and nongovernmental organization R3 coordinators with Service employees in respective programs/states.

- a. By August 1, 2018, connect Service managers with state, tribal and nongovernmental organization R3 coordinators by providing contact lists to all stakeholders.
3. *Inventory current R3 programs, where they exist and who implements the programs.
 - a. Complete inventory of R3 programs occurring on Service lands by August 1, 2018.
4. Partner with states, tribes and nongovernmental organizations to identify target audiences for R3 programs.
 - a. Coordinate with state, tribes, and nongovernmental organization partners to identify target audiences for R3 programs on Service lands by September 1, 2018.
5. Assist Service employees in description of the primary purpose of an R3 program (e.g., increase awareness, interest or skills).
 - a. By October 1, 2018, describe primary purpose of all R3 programs occurring on Service lands in the Midwest Region.
6. Coordinate with state and industry partners to develop a “Partner with the Excise Tax Payer” events in the Midwest Region.
 - a. Hold at least one “Partner with the Excise Tax Payer” event annually.
7. Identify evaluation tools available for Service R3 programs (must be OMB approved).
 - a. Throughout 2018, coordinate with state, tribal and nongovernmental organization partners to align data collected at Service hosted R3 programs and adopt state/nongovernmental organization evaluation tools set up for their programs.
 - b. *Provide training to Service employees on evaluation tools for R3 programs throughout 2018.
8. Write evergreen feature stories about hunting, angling and outdoor recreational opportunities for Service websites and the media (e.g., [Valuing the hunting tradition](#), [Mobility impaired hunting](#), [Mentored youth hunts](#)).
 - a. By September 1, 2018, complete an inventory of outlets (e.g., Outdoor News, state fish and wildlife agency publications, tribally-owned newspapers) for opportunities as well as existing communication messaging.

- b. External Affairs will continue to work with regional leadership and field stations to develop feature story content, create media availabilities in the field and assess website metrics (e.g., time on page) as appropriate and with the objective of better tailoring story content for niche audiences.
- 9. *Develop a communication process internally and cross-programmatically to and from the field.
 - a. By August 1, 2018, develop communication plan for carrying messages to and from the Outdoor Access Initiative Teams and Service employees.



Tribal members discussing target practice technique. Photo courtesy of 1854 Treaty Authority.

Objective 3

Increase Access and Opportunity for Outdoor recreation

Priority Actions:

- 1. *Inventory current hunting and fishing programs on Service lands in collaboration with the Regional Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Recreation Team.
 - a. By August 1 2018, complete inventory of current hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation programs occurring on Service lands.
- 2. *Expand hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational capacity on Service lands by partnering with states, tribes and nongovernmental organizations, when appropriate.

- a. By August 1, 2018, connect Service land managers with state, tribal, and nongovernmental organization R3 coordinators by providing contact lists to all stakeholders.
3. *Increase access to hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities on Service lands, when appropriate.
 - a. Coordinate with Midwest Hunting and Fishing Chief, Outdoor Access Team, and Service managers to assess access on Service lands.
4. *Prioritize habitat retention, restoration, and enhancement efforts that include human dimension aspects; i.e., hunter/angler access and proximity to human population centers.
5. *Identify and document barriers to outdoor recreation on Service lands in the Midwest Region.



Iowa youth trapshooting championships. Photo courtesy of Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Objective 4

In-reach: implement hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation activities within the Regional Office and other Service offices to increase the knowledge and appreciation of hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation among Service employees. Transfer these ideas to field stations.

Priority Actions:

1. As a model for field stations, the Regional Office in partnership with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, implement an archery program, including training of instructors.

- a. Utilize National Archery in Schools Program archery kit at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to host an archery program by September 2018.
2. As a model for field stations, the Regional Office will host a series of monthly “in-reach” activities including brown-bag talks, “learn to hunt/fish” talks, fishing and hunting trips, birding, hiking, tribal culture, etc. for interested employees.
 - a. Coordinate and plan at least 12 “in-reach” activities annually for Service employees.
3. Create list of interested hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation mentors to begin creating a social support structure for interested audiences.
 - a. By August 1 2018, compile a list of willing mentors for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation.
4. As a model for field stations, the Regional Office will initiate an equipment loaner program to provide equipment to interested employees who wish to start hunting, fishing or other outdoor recreation, housed at the Regional Office.
 - a. By August 1, 2018, start collecting items for the equipment loaner program.
5. As a model for field stations, the Regional Office will partner with organizations to provide opportunities to learn boating safety skills.
6. As a model for field stations, the Regional Office will partner with organizations to provide opportunities to learn tribal subsistence practices in treaty reserved areas.
7. Provide information to employees of local outdoor recreation opportunities, including learning opportunities that are available through other organizations.